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ABSTRACT

The Canadian Ministry of Education with support from school boards and teachers' federations, had hoped to see 50% of all positions of responsibility in school be undertaken by women before the year 2000. This paper discusses the meanings that three exemplary women principals gave to leadership and the ways in which they enacted leadership in their school contexts. Data were collected through six indepth interviews with each of six women principals in a large urban school board in northwestern Ontario, Canada. The interviews were conducted at 3-month intervals over a period of 2 school years. The paper reports on three of the principals. The women administrators had been principals for at least 1 year, had been successful and innovative teachers, and had other administrative experience. They were concerned with empowering teachers and students; establishing and maintaining strong instructional priorities; encouraging the social, cultural, and emotional development of students, student-student, and student-teacher relationships; and providing teachers with support and feedback. The findings lend support to the interpretive and functional perspective, which examines how leaders interpret and help their coworkers to tell their own stories and to view their school as unique. (Contains 38 references). (LMI)

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A Passion for Excellence: Stories of Three Women in Leadership

by

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Author's Note

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A Passion for Excellence: Stories of Three Women in Leadership

In recent times, efforts are underway to encourage more women to undertake formal leadership roles within organizations. In 1992, the Ministry of Education with support from school boards and teachers' federations, had hoped to see 50% of all positions of responsibility in school be undertaken by women before the year 2000. During recent years, more women have applied to be vice principals and principals, with a number successfully achieving that goal. Earlier researchers (Slauenwhite & Skok, 1991; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988) tell us that most if not all of these women have had long careers as exemplary teachers and curriculum leaders. The three women principals discussed in this paper have had such exemplary careers. In varied ways, each expresses a passion for excellence in their own teaching and leadership and in education generally.

The purposes of this paper are to describe and discuss, through their own eyes and voices, the meanings each of the women give to leadership, and the ways in which they enact leadership in their school contexts. An additional purpose is to explore various theoretical perspectives which support the interpretation of three women's experiences with leadership. The findings discussed in this paper have emerged as part of a larger study of women in leadership (Fennell & King, 1993). The paper begins with brief discussions of the significance of the research and the theoretical perspectives which were considered. The methodology will be discussed in the next section, followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings, in relation to the theoretical perspectives, and the conclusions.

Significance of the Research

Sociologists have suggested, for some time, the importance of studying the work and experiences of women on their own terms and through their own experiences. Neilsen (1990) considers feminist scholarship as a useful test for the abstract concept of a paradigm shift, and for "seeing women rather than just men in center stage" (p. 19). Cook and Fonow (1990) support Neilsen's assertions, and note that in social research this "involves defining women as the focus of analysis, . . . and viewing gender as a crucial influence of the network of relations

encompassing the research act" (p. 73). Through their own extensive review of the sociological literature on studies of women and feminist methodologies, they identified five basic epistemological principles. Included are the necessity of continually noting the significance of gender and gender assymmetry as a basic aspect of all social life, the centrality of 'conciousness-raising' as a specific methodological tool and way of viewing the social world, the need to challenge the view that the subject and object of research can be separated from each other, concern for the ethical implications of research about women, and the emphasis on empowering women and transforming patriarical social institutions through research (p. 72 - 73). They note that, while few studies address all of these principles, all feminist research addresses at least one of them in some significant way. The interest in studying the work of women through their own experiences, such as is done in this study, and the interest in the concepts of empowerment and transformation make a contribution to the understanding of gender and to a greater understanding of social world as a whole.

As a branch of sociological theory, researchers in educational administration have been reiterating the call for learning about women's perspectives of and experiences in administrative work as a way of challenging, and eventually transforming theories in the field. Shakeshaft (1989), an early researcher on gender in educational administration, noted six stages of research in the field. Initially, the absence of women in the field was documented, followed by a search for women who were or are administrators. The third stage studies women as disadvantaged or subordinate. In the fourth stage, researchers discuss the importance of studying women on their own terms in educational administration; this is in preparation for the fifth and sixth stages, women's experiences as challenges to theory and the transformation of theory. The research in this paper begins at the fourth stage, but progresses to the fifth where, in the words of Shakeshaft (1989), the researcher has "begun to gather information that allows us to speculate on issues in practice and perhaps to demonstrate that theory and practice are intertwined" (p. 329).

Other women researchers in educational administration also note the importance of studying the work of women and gender. Jones (1990) notes that "The impact of gender on roles and organizational behavior has been and . . . will continue to be a topic of much interest and research" (p. 32). She further notes that, in order to increase our knowledge about gender in educational administration, research methods beyond the traditional ones in the field will be

required. Jones concludes that "Behavioral scientists in educational administration must improve their efforts to create and define new, unbiased contructs" (p. 32) [for our research]. Glazer (1991) reiterates the calls of earlier researchers in sociology and educational administration for studying women's work in education from their own perspectives. Following up particularly on Shakeshaft's sixth stage, she notes that "Changing the lens in how we study the professions is the first step in their transformation" (p. 338). She views this as the first step in the move towards feminizing not only classrooms, but also principals' offices and other administrative positions. She concludes:

> A feminized work force in the classroom and in the principal's office presents a challenging opportunity to strengthen the alliance between feminism and professionalism, restructuring the public and private spheres of human existence to be more responsive to women's concerns and to build nonbureaucratic, nonheirarchical systems. (p. 338)

The experiences of the three women principals examined in this discussion are examples of efforts on their parts to reflect upon their own work in effort to transform their own work and that of others in their school environments. In the next section, the methodology of the research will be outlined and discussed.

Methodology

Much of the research about leadership in general, and educational leadership in particular, has been conducted from the positivist social science perspective (Glazer, 1992; Jones, 1990; Immegart. 1988). In recent years, theories of organization and leadership have been challenged to include more perspectives and to consider reality from a variety of paradigms (Capper, 1992; Glazer, 1991; Greenfield, 1974; Mitchell, 1990). Lather (1986) notes that "Research paradigms inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in" (p. 259). She further notes that researchers are in a period of shift in their understanding of what constitutes research and scientific inquiry. As an example of such a shift, Mitchell (1990) studied educational leadership, using phenomenology, from the perspective of being an educational leader. Describing his work, Mitchell notes that "A phenomenology of educational leadership examines the acts, beliefs, goals, feelings, dreams, illusions, and frames of reference of the total experience of one who is involved in the process of educational leadership" (p. 3). Mitchell also notes that

"all who call themselves phenomenologists are not using the same method" (p. 2). He further notes that phenomenology cannot be equated with an objective view of a phenomenon; instead, the phenomenon must be considered from a variety of perspectives, both subjective and objective based on knowledge which is subjective and intuitive as well as empirical. Mitchell's work is one of the few published studies of the phenomenon of educational leadership from an interpretive perspective.

In looking at the work of women who are educational leaders, using different lenses as suggested by Glazer (1991), could involve a number different perspectives and methodologies such as those discussed by Harding (1987), Neilsen (1990) and Cook and Fonow (1990). Each of these writers focuses on using methodologies which will provide opportunities for interpreting women's experiences from their own perspectives and in ways that move beyond simply considering women's experiences as subsets of men's experiences and values. The emphasis in this research is on the joining of women's experiences, as viewed and interpreted from their own perspectives, with the concepts of the phenomenology and educational leadership.

Phenomenology as a method of investigation. In concluding her comments on the meaning of phenomenological research, Tesch (1984) comments that "Phenomenological research accumulates knowledge on the range of the individual, the specific, the unique. Its purpose is to probe into the richness of human experience and to illuminate the complexity of the individual perception and action against the background of our knowledge of the general laws or regularities in human nature" (p. 5). She notes that phenomenological studies are based on data collected through such methods as in-depth interviews or conversations which are dialogic introspections, in which phenomenon are explored from many aspects over a period of time. She notes three phases which tend to be present in phenomenological investigations. Phase I involves a very broad and tentative conceptualization and general exploration of the dimensions of the phenomenon. Gradually, this exploration is narrowed down to more relevant leads and, in phase II, the leads are filled in and checked. Moving toward the third phase the descriptions are further narrowed down to a prototypical description. In Phase III, confirmation of the protypical description occurs followed by a pinpointing of the phenomenon. Two of the three types of questions which she notes as being common in phenomenological research include experiences believed to be important sociological phenomena in our time and changes or transitions that are

of special importance at this time. The questions under investigation in this study on women's lived experiences with educational leadership are well suited to the two types of questions described by Tesch.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) discuss phenomenology as the capturing of the process of interpretation through which individuals define their worlds. In an earlier reference, Bogdan and Taylor (1975) note that the interpretation of human experience takes place through the concept of verstehen - or the "empathic understanding or an ability to reproduce in one's own mind the feelings, motive and thoughts behind the actions of others" (p. 14). One of the key aspects of the methodology chosen for this research is the concept of in-dwelling (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The concept of in-dwelling is an attempt to live within the other phenomenon as it is experienced or to attempt to walk a mile in the shoes of the other. The empathic perspective on the study of a phenomenon also involves thoughtful reflection. Maykut and Morehouse note that, while the researcher is an in-depth interviewer, he or she "also removes him or herself from the situation to rethink the meanings of the experience" (p. 25).

Participants in the research. The principals who were participants in this research discussed in this paper were six chosen from a group of twelve women who were principals in a large urban school board in Northwestern Ontario, Canada. In order to be invited to participate in the research, each principal had to have served as principal for at least one school year prior to the year the research began, and to have held other significant leadership positions within the Board. The leadership positions considered were vice-principalships, roles as curriculum consultants or curriculum partners, leaders of specific curriculum or program initiatives within the Board, or leadership positions in the Teachers' Federation within the Board. Three of the six cases from the study are discussed in this paper.

Data collection. The main source of data for this study was collected through in-depth interviewing. The interviews were used to explore and gather experiential narrative material to use as a resource for understanding the phenomenon of leadership, and to develop a 'conversational relation' with each of the principals in the research (Van Manen, 1992).

Based on the plan outlined in the SSHRC proposal (Fennell & King, 1993), the researcher conducted six in-depth interviews with each of the participants at three-month intervals over a period of two school years. Each interview was between 1 - 2 hours in length. Initial interviews

were based on questions which focussed on the participants' experiences with leadership, their life stories, and their professional journeys. However, the researcher's questions acted as lead ins for more in-depth conversations on participants' experiences, and were never used to structure the interviews. Following the initial interview, all initiating and guiding questions for the remaining interviews were developed from conversations in the previous interview(s).

As much as possible, the researcher encouraged participants to share critical incidents, in the form of anecdotes, stories or experiences, about ideas and areas they were discussing. The researcher used probing questions to draw out further illustrations and ideas during the interviews, and to saturate the data base from each area under discussion. While the interviews were conducted in as open a way as possible, ". . . it is important to realize that the interview process needs to be disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place" (Van Manen, p. 66). The researcher made efforts throughout to ensure that the interviews remained focussed. The researcher also used observation and ethnographic field noting as a second way of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). These were used mainly to develop a fuller context for the research. These were written from the perspective of an observer, but not a participant observer. They were also done using an open approach. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994) note "The qualitative researcher's field notes contain what has been seen and heard by the researcher, without interpretation" (p. 73).

Data analysis. Data analysis for this research has been an ongoing part of the research process. Following each interview, the researcher read and checked each of the interview transcripts after it was transcribed. This involved listening to portions or all of the tapes and making corrections to words in the transcript where necessary. The second purpose for rereading and checking the transcripts was to prepare for the next interview with each of the participants. In addition to exploring new areas and experiences with the phenomenon of leadership, the researcher used subsequent interviews to clarify and further develop areas from the previous interview, and to verify participants' meanings and experiences (Van Manen, 1992; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Following the completion of the data collection, the researcher began a more detailed analysis of each of the transcripts. The analysis at this second level was to isolate themes and concepts within each of the interviews. Using Van Manen's (1992) strategies for isolating

themes, the researcher used the following three steps. Firstly, she read each of the transcripts for each of the participants one at a time, line by line, reflecting upon the meaning of those words in relation to the phenomenon of leadership. Secondly, selected parts of each line or the total text were marked and underlined to indicate words, phrases or sentences which revealed the participant's meaning of the phenomenon. Thirdly, the researcher looked over a portion or the text as a whole, reflecting on the meaning and significance of that text as a whole in the exploration of the phenomenon. Instead of cutting and pasting portions of text on to cards and linking them to themes, the researcher used concept mapping to determine all of the themes and subthemes related to the phenomenon of leadership. Each entry on the concept map was labelled with detailed information about the page number and transcript number where a fuller reference and context for the theme could be found. As the detailed analysis continues, the concept maps of each of the six participants will be linked and compared for further cross themes and common patterns.

In summary, the researcher used the three approaches suggested by Van Manen (1992) ,in reverse order, in the first detailed analysis of the data. Concept maps were then used to group themes and subthemes for each participant. The use of concept maps is not something which has been documented by other researchers. This researcher has found it most helpful in seeing a whole picture of the phenomenon of leadership through the experiences of each individual participant.

Presentation of the Findings

In this section the principals' descriptions of their work will be presented in the form of three, individual stories. Each will begin with a brief description of the school context and the principal's work biography. Their perceptions of meanings and enactments of leadership will then follow.

Kathryn

Background. When Kathryn began her principalship, ten years prior to the beginning of this research, she was the only woman principal in her school board. She entered the principalship of a small, rural school directly from a two-year secondment as a curriculum

consultant. She did not have a vice principalship prior to becoming principal. She noted "I went right into the principalship. I didn't have a vice principalship. That caused some people some grief. There was a fair amount of ruffling happening out in the system for some folks when I was given the principalship." Kathryn had worked in three other schools prior to becoming principal of School A.

School A was a large, newly refurbished elementary school with classes from Kindergarten to Grade eight. It was a dual-track school, with classes in both English and French-Immersion. With a student population of 650, this was considered a large elementary school within the Board. The school and grounds were attractive and well kept. Kathryn worked closely with the custodial staff to ensure that the school and grounds were clean, attractive places for students. Kathryn often stopped to chat with the chief custodian in the hallway, asking him if things were up to date, and requesting his assistance for setting up times for firedrills and the installation of playground equipment.

Meanings of Leadership. In reading and reflecting about the six intense conversations between the researcher and Kathryn, two of the most interesting and important themes which emerged were leadership as problem-solving, and the leadership as adult education. Kathryn spoke of problem solving with teachers, students, and parents. Much of her emphasis on problem-solving involved consultations with others, such as teachers or her vice principal. Her role as an adult educator involved her own learning and reflection, as well as making learning situations available to others with whom she worked.

Leadership as problem-solving. Kathryn described much of her work as problem solving with teachers, students, parents and support staff. Her problem solving with teachers involved assisting them to implement new curriculum materials, outcomes and assessment strategies for teaching problem-solving in mathematics, and issues with some individual teachers related to competence in teaching practice.

The situations of curriculum problem-solving discussed throughout our conversations involved a mathematics curriculum project. At the time this research began, Kathryn was working on a ministry project with groups of teachers who were attempting to implement mathematics guidelines from the provincial Common Curriculum using concrete materials and new strategies for teaching problem solving. They were also learning about ways to improve

their strategies for student assessment in mathematics. Initially, Kathryn's strategy was to approach teachers to ask them how they would like to develop and implement the topics. She noted:

> We had talked about it [the project] at a staff meeting a few weeks back and I asked people, What makes the most sense for us to do next? We have a P. A. day coming. . . . What came from staff was 'we really want to get into something intensively'. What they were doing was working in teams . . . they were split by language as well as by division and they were going to develop some units that took one strand and work it right through.

To support her own work in the area, and that of teachers, Kathryn worked with a curriculum consultant from the school board to set up an in-service sessions for teachers on using concrete materials to teach problem solving to students in mathematics. She explained to the consultant that teachers needed some "go away with tasks" that they could implement in their own classrooms following the in-service, as well as some longer term goals. Kathryn also indicated that she planned to do some tracking to see the benefits and glitches of the implementation as teachers were trying to apply the strategies in their classrooms.

As a follow-up, Kathryn and the vice principal went around to "get a sense if [teachers] were really using this guideline, if it's really happening, or if we are still relying on our textbook and our manual that goes with it and not really trying to look at anything differently." Kathryn noted in her follow-up visits that, while that progress was being made, two sessions with teachers were not enough to help them fully implement the changes she had hoped to see. Her attitude then became one of support but continued concern with learning activities which would help teachers in working toward the goals they had set for themselves. She commented "You know, when you do something new, it takes so much longer [than originally planned]".

Problem solving with teachers around areas of teaching competence was also evident in Kathryn's work. She noted that, on arrival at the school a number of teachers who had been there many years were too threatened by the possibilities of change to even begin to look at their teaching practices. She noted "It took a while and some changes to get people to the point where this year they are actually looking at their practices". The changes Kathryn implemented were having teachers involved in decision-making about "what happens in the school for kids", and for their own growth. She used division groups as sources for small group decision-making and

teacher discussions. She further indicated that, if she and the vice principal noted a teacher having trouble in an area, they would try to intervene to assist the teacher with planning. They might also ask curriculum consultants from the Board to assist the teacher. Kathryn attempted to be very supportive as she worked with teachers having problems with teaching, but she has also said to teachers "you have got to do a job for these kids", and that means ensuring that changes are made to make classroom teaching practices more effective for children.

For Kathryn, problem-solving with students began before problems ever emerged by forming strong relationships with the them in the school. She did this through regular classroom visitations. She noted, "We (she and the vice principal) have put a lot of energy into being in the classrooms; when we are in the classrooms we go right to the children and see what they are doing and talk with them about what they are doing, what they are learning and why." One of the results of these visits was that students began to see her as a teacher and "not just a principal in the office". Kathryn also worked on extra-curriculum activities such as basket-ball coaching and advising the student council to further build relationships with students. She noted that she likes to spend 30% of her time visiting classrooms, and that she prepared a grid on which she keeps track of the times and durations of visits to each classroom so that noone gets missed.

Kathryn also noted that she "talked to teachers about kids", and that she got "to know needs of some children much more than others . . . usually the ones that need some extra help in whatever way." She noted that in problem-solving with children in areas of discipline it is important that students "get to see her as a person who listens; a person that makes decisions that feel okay with them". Kathryn noted that she and the students worked out consequences which students viewed as legitimate, reasonable and consistent. Speaking of consequences, Kathryn noted "We find some things that are meaningful for all of us". She further noted that "the tone they [the students] talk to you with tells you that they know that they will problem solve with you. It is not all defensive". She concluded that, since she did not see the same students over and over for discipline issues, the strategies were successful.

Parents became very much apart of the problem-solving strategies in discipline issues with students. Kathryn noted that "Students know that you are going to involve their parents, that it is a team effort". She elaborated that "I often bring parents in the second time I have had to deal with a student so that we can problem solve together". Kathryn gave an example of a

third grade child who had thrown a rock through window in the school; she also had a number of items he had allegedly removed from a neighbourhood store. Kathryn asked the student's mother to come in so she could "find out what she was dealing with at home." The mother "shared a lot of information and then talked about some possible ways of dealing with the student." Following the discussions with the parent, Kathryn worked with the classroom teacher and the student "on the problem solving and them also on the consequences." Kathryn told the student that, since he had damaged the school and did not seem to value the school, he would have to do additional work to learn how difficult it was to maintain the school. The student accepted the consequences and ended up liking the work, "probably because he gets some good feelings about contributing." These are examples of the citizenship lessons which Kathryn and the vice-principal gave to students for breaches of discipline using problem-solving and consequences instead of punishment.

Kathryn and the teachers in School A had done a great deal of work to prepare for the amalgamation of their school with a smaller school nearby. They had had students over to the school to tour the building and take part in some activities. They had also had information nights for parents to tour the building and ask questions about the curriculum. Children had also been invited to come with their parents. A great deal of effort was made on the part of students and teachers to help the new students and their parents feel welcome. Kathryn concluded that "Kids need to know that we will work through problems with them. They need to know that we will follow up and all of that sort of thing."

Leadership as adult education. To Kathryn, part of her work with teachers involved functioning as an adult educator. Meetings and professional development activities do not consist only of information sharing in School A, but of involving teachers in activities related to their own growth as teachers and people. Much of the leadership around adult learning involved teachers in decision-making related to their own learning. Kathryn noted that "having staff involved in the school focus helps them feel that they are in charge of what happens in the school for kids".

A major part of what Kathryn and the teachers worked toward was ensuring that the learning which teachers were developing was transferring to students in the classroom. To ensure students learning, Kathryn realized that teachers had to reflect carefully on their classroom

practices and modify them when necessary. Following her initial observations of teachers' classroom teaching she noted "We have to look at how we are introducing [the concepts] and how we are transferring [the concepts] and how we are having the kids apply that because they are not getting these concepts. We are jumping too quickly . . . way into areas that these kids are not ready for".

Kathryn indicated that she started working with the teachers as soon as they received the guidelines and that she "did a whole lot of concrete things with the teachers that forced them to look at what was different about that particular document". From there, she worked with teachers on short in-service sessions which involved hands-on activities that could be used in the classroom. As she worked with teachers, Kathryn admitted "I don't have all the answers . . . we could end up with a whole sheet of questions by the time we are done, but I'm going to force all of us to delve into [the document] and see if we can really improve the way that we teach." Kathryn also worked with individual teachers whom she believed were 'reluctant learners', by means of pressure and support, to encourage and insist that they examine and continue to develop their teaching practices to create more meaningful learning experiences for their students and more fulfilling careers for themselves.

Kathryn described a situation in which she insisted that a teacher change grade and division level to help him develop his teaching experiences. She said that initially "he hated it. He was just so angry. He came to me a few months later and said it was okay. We had helped him through some things, and a few months later he said it was okay. I've bumped into him several times and he has on several occasions said 'that was the best thing you ever did for me. It was good for me'".

As she talked about ways in which she enacted leadership, Kathryn she noted "I think I lead by getting involved; sometimes by modelling." She further noted "I am sharing some of the teaching right now, getting involved with the kids where the teachers get to see you". She seemed concerned about the image of working with teachers. She also encouraged teachers to be involved in making decisions which directly affected them. She also stressed her concerns with listening to teachers and students and encouraging them to listen to each other. She noted "I think if we learn to listen to one another and listen to what kids are saying, what teachers are saying, we are able to help each other in this journey." She also saw herself as "very much a

caretaker of a lot of things". Discussing the concept further she noted:

You're caretaker of the academics, the curriculum, the balance of life that happens in your school for your staff. Shushing people out if they're here too long or if they're getting overwhelmed trying to talk to them about that sort of thing. So you are looking after the health and welfare of people, staff and students. You're phoning moms to let them know that their kid is confiding in you about her brother beating her up. A caretaker in a whole lot of areas. [As a leader] you are a person who has to be willing to show staff that you're human, that you're part of the team and they must see you as a learner, as very much a teacher with them. Yet you also feel this pressure to be the wise old owl, at least I do.

In summary, Kathryn was a leader with saw herself as a problem solver with others, a teacher, learner, adult educator, listener, and a caretaker. Her passion for excellence lay in her constant concern for the quality of working life for both students and teachers in School A. While she claimed nothing profound in who she was and how she worked, she claimed that she and the teachers "are having to learn how to be good problem solvers and teach that to children." In the next section, we will meet Esther, an educator and leader whose background is somewhat less traditional than Kathryn's.

Esther

Background. When Esther spoke of her work in leadership, she noted that "it always kind of amazes me that I have become principal". She further noted that her career evolved from that of an elementary teacher, through two years in the vice-principalship, two years as principal of a smaller rural school, to her position at the time this research began as principal of School B, a kindergarten to grade eight elementary school with an enrollment of approximately 500 students.

As a young wife and mother in the 1950's, Esther was a 'stay at home mom' until her children grew older. She attended what was then referred to as teachers' college in her late thirties, and her teaching career evolved from there. Similar to Kathryn, Esther was an excellent and innovative teacher whose previous experiences had included much team teaching. She believed that she, and other women with similar backgrounds, had recently been recruited into principalships because the concept had changed from that of principal as manager to principal as curriculum and instructional leader.

Meanings of leadership. To Esther, leadership had a number of meanings. One was that of being a grandmother. She noted that "I don't see myself as a great thinker or as a fabulous manager, knowing all the answers". She said her role reminded her of being a grandmother,

being able to work with children, and having many ideas about things, but being able to give others opportunities to implement the ideas and to develop and implement ideas of their own. She also saw herself, as did the teachers in the school, as "The Keeper of the Dream". Speaking of the work that had happened in School B with whole language and other innovations, she noted that the teachers with whom she worked were "a very empowered group, but you still need someone as we call it who is the keeper of the dream". The teacher who made that comment to Esther also told her "You push us gently and I think that is really important". She concluded, "Leadership as the 'Keeper of the Dream' is being there to support, keep the direction, and keep the motivation going". The keeper of the dream image relates closely to that of grandmother as leader.

In a later conversation with the researcher, Esther discussed the concept the leadership as servanthood. She explained the role of a servant leader through the questions, "How can I support those teachers? How can I make their jobs in the classrooms easier? How can I help them do their job better and provide a better learning environment for kids?" She further explained that to be a servant leader:

> You have to be free from the need for power. Power is there, but I think you have to be free to share it as much as you possibly can. You have to feel strong enough in yourself to do that, to involve all of the players, rather than have dictums come from on high. But the leader as servant is crucial if you want to get the best from people. I think the idea of assisting them to do their best is probably going to become more important all the time.

Much of the servant leadership strategy Esther discussed involved flexibility and sharing. She stated:

> It's really foolish for one person to think that they make all the decisions. So, it's shared decision making; all of those things have to be there if you are going to lead. A leader needs to be someone who is very confident in themselves as a person. They have to feel able to say "I don't know how to do this. I need your help," or "Let's find someone who knows", or "I made a mistake here." I think that kind of person has to be there, and someone who really, truly cares about people.

In enacting servant or shared leadership, Esther referred to a phenomenon from nature in which, as flocks of geese fly in a V formation, "they take turns being leader and someone else will rotate up to the front" eventually throughout the journey. She noted that this type of leadership brings about a "collaborative culture" which produced positive relationships among staff. Esther

concluded that "I see none of the knit-picking and the bickering among staff; they are here to support each other. It's not a competition. It's what can we do to help each other to serve kids better?"

Similar to Kathryn, Esther sees part of her leadership mandate as being an adult educator. Many of her efforts in this area have to do with helping teachers and parents conceptualize learning in new ways. She noted:

Learning is not the schooling that a lot of people think of with either like or dislike. We have many, many parents who want what they had in school because they can see that if a sheet of spelling is all correct, [students] know something. And yet, it can't be that way in the world as we know it. There's a real need to help people understand that learning goes on all the time. It doesn't just go on between 9:00 and 3:30 in school; and they must be part of the learning process with their students. We looked at our tradition of IQ scores. From the reading and knowledge I have with Gardner's work in multiple intelligence, it is a fallacy to even thing there is only one IQ. There's so much of that kind of knowledge that the average parent doesn't have, isn't aware of. So they create situations for their children that make it almost impossible for them to succeed. I think we have to work very hard at opening the public's eyes and having them understand that education has changed . . . changed drastically.

Esther worked through communication with teachers at in-service sessions, newsletters and meetings with parents, as well as developing new student-led reporting processes with both teachers and parents as ways to help everyone learn about the changes she saw in the conceptualization of learning. She also saw Parent Advisory Councils as additional opportunities for showing parents what children do and learn about in schools. She was also constantly working with teachers to reflect on their practices and to ask questions of themselves such as "Is what I'm doing getting the results that I want to get?" Esther concluded that, "It's not good enough to just follow the book and our bag of tricks. I think we need to look at ourselves quite honestly and be very knowledgeable about what we are doing".

Related to being an adult educator is also the concept of leadership as problem-solving. In School B, Esther believes that the concept has been enhanced by the emphasis on cooperation, both through cooperative learning strategies of teaching, but also the general attitude of cooperation among teachers, between teachers and students, and between the school and the members of the community. Esther noted that, particularly among the older students, teachers and administrators were seen by students as "problem solvers, and not out to get the kids. She

concluded that "I think the whole cooperative focus has helped there a lot".

In summary, Esther viewed leadership mainly from the perspectives of servant leadership and shared leadership. However, she still heeded the calls of teachers to be the 'Keeper of the dream', which the group had developed together. Esther noted the emphasis on cooperation in the school among teachers, herself, and between teachers and students. Esther also emphasized the changes in education and the differing conceptualizations of learning which affected the work of teachers, students, and herself as leader in the school. In the next section, we will meet Lynda, a leader with a francophone cultural background.

Lynda

Background. As the youngest of the three principals presented in this discussion, Lynda is also the least experienced. At the beginning of this research, she had begun her third year in the principalship, and had just opened an refurbished dual-track, French immersion and English, kindergarten to grade eight school in a well-established urban neighbourhood. School C had an enrollment of approximately 500 students. Some of the students came from the neighbourhood, while others were bussed to School C because of the French Immersion programs taking place there. Lynda was particularly well suited to this school because of her bilingual francophone Canadian background. Prior to her work as principal in a smaller dual track school, Lynda had been a vice principal and a successful curriculum consultant in the Board.

Unlike the other two principals, Lynda became aware of her leadership abilities as a young person growing up as the oldest sibling in a large family and through working in formal, paid leadership roles in recreation programs in her home community, a small town on the North shore of Lake Superior. Lynda commented "The first time I ever thought about becoming a leader or that I even considered that I might have leadership abilities was probably when I was 18 or 19 . . . I was hired as a supervisor for the beach and I was in charge of the whole program and even the personnel".. Lynda further commented that, after she had taught about five years, a colleague told her that she had a lot of abilities which would be good for school leadership.

Meanings and enacting of leadership. In our initial conversation about the meaning of leadership, Lynda stated "Leadership is the power to influence". She further noted that "[Leadership] is the ability to recognize the strengths and the areas for growth in people, to take those areas, nurture them, and provide all the opportunities [for individuals to share their

strengths and develop their areas for growth]". Lynda added that nurturing others takes time and must be done carefully. She admitted that in her case, and generally, if you want to get anywhere, "you can't do it alone, and there are all kinds of people around you that have all the strengths, and all the abilities to help you get there". She indicated that, often, the nurturing process she used consisted of encouraging the strengths she noted in her colleagues, "acknowledging them as much as possible, and eventually saying 'Now do you mind sharing with your colleagues what you do?" Lynda used notes to tell the teachers about all of the great things she saw them doing in their classrooms with their students. If she noted something which needed correction in a classroom, she stated "I wrote a little note, love what you are doing here. P. S. Just a little correction to make and here is the error, and you know that the person takes it well; it's very subtle. I think it is done respectfully; and you know as a colleague, you would like to know".

Some of the meanings of leadership for Lynda were expressed in her views of the qualities of poor leadership. Lynda saw a poor leader as one who used collaborative decision-making processes to take decisions in the directions they wanted to go rather than to their logical conclusions based on the wishes of the group. Another description of a poor leader was someone who was dictatorial, who insulted and intimidated colleagues and others around them, and who does not value the work of others in the organization. Her view of a school organization was that everyone was part of a big machine which needed all parts to make the machine function well. She noted "If a leader doesn't acknowledge that all those parts are essential to make it happen, that it's not just the leader that makes it happen, it's everybody that makes it happen, people know that, they feel that".

Lynda believed that different styles of leadership could meet with the same results. While she noted that she had seen many aspects of leadership in the work of others which she would not do personally, she stated "Different leaders are effective". Looking at qualities which she believed were essential to effective leadership she commented:

> I think being able to communicate with your staff is probably number one. If they feel they can talk to you and that it is not going to come back on them, that it is private, that it's personal, that it's supportive. That you really do care. You take a minute to listen, and you kind of go the long way [for others].

Speaking of her own leadership, Lynda indicated that she had heard that her colleagues found the

atmosphere and work climate in the school very positive; a good place to teach. She used her intuition a great deal as part of her leadership strategy, which she labelled as "this gut feeling". She further noted, "I have a really good gut feeling about most people". Another factor she commented on was the fragility of human beings. She stated "We are all the same, we are all human; we're so fragile. And I think if you [hopefully] always remember that other people are fragile, too". Along with concerns about the fragility of humans, Lynda is also concerned that teachers learn to see their own humanity and that of those with whom they work a larger picture than their own small worlds or the world of their school. She noted "I think my job is to help teachers get that big picture", and further that "I think as a leader my job is to make sure that that big picture is always there".

Another quality which Lynda valued in her own leadership was her honesty and her ability to confront issues openly, honestly, and in a timely fashion. She cited an example from that morning in which she had received a telephone call from a parent indicating that her child felt that school athletic teams were not selected fairly, and that teachers' children were always selected for the teams. In planning the ways she would raise the issues, Lynda noted:

> I think honesty is really, really important. . . . Tomorrow, I will be really honest as usual. I'm just going to say this is the phone call I received, these are the issues that were pointed out. . . . Then I'm going to say 'Now in order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding with parents, the community and everybody, I'd like to set up this criteria and the process that we are going to use to select teams so that you, as parents of children who got selected, aren't perceived in a negative way. . . . And that the school is perceived to be fair for everybody.

Lynda also noted the importance of honesty, fairness and intuition in working through problems with students. She discussed a difficult group of grade eight students which were dominated by two negative student personalities which made teaching the class very difficult. Lynda intervened significantly with the teacher and the parents to have these two troublesome student personalities removed from the school. One returned to an English stream at her neighbourhood school, while the other. The other encountered difficulties and left the school. Lynda noted "She's in custody; we didn't do anything with that one. That wasn't us at all". She concluded that the solutions to some students' problems are beyond the abilities of teachers and schools. She noted, generally, many of the intermediate students in the school had matured a great deal since she first began with them at the beginning of the school year. She noted that she and those

students were exchanging smiles more often and there was greater evidence of sense of humor between them because teachers were more comfortable showing that side of things to students and students were more comfortable with accepting it. When asked by the researcher to identify leadership qualities which were useful in such situations she responded that "Intuition about kids" was an important part of her strategy just as it was in working with adults. Lynda added some questions to her comments about her use of intuition. "Why are they there? What makes them do that? There is something behind that [behaviour], and often I can pinpoint it without being told much. Intuition. Caring. Kids have to know you care".

Lynda also discussed problem-solving strategies as part of her leadership experiences. She discussed a difficult situation with a special education teacher in the school. She noted that the problem was "a personnel issue as much as it is an administrative program issue for the entire school". She noted that the teacher in question was very talented, and did parts of her work very well, but that the teacher did not seem to want to do other essential parts of her role involving direct services with students. Lynda noted that she and her vice principal waited for this teacher to begin those responsibilities, but when they did not Lynda indicated that she had a meeting with the person and was very adamant that those parts of the work were to begin as soon as possible, even on a trial time-table for one month. As a way of supporting her problem-solving efforts, Lynda went to the Board office to talk with officials and consultants who understood the roles and how to implement them. She then returned to the school with the information and through processes of pressure and support, was encouraging the teacher to implement all aspects of her role. Lynda expressed a great deal of frustration with this problem because she had been working on it with the teacher and the vice principal for almost a year. She noted "I don't want to come down 'Thou Shalt' and be the dictator. But there is no doubt, I'm learning there are some people you have to be that way with". Having acknowledged this, Lynda indicated that she would be continuing to work on these problems with the teacher and the vice-principal for some time to come and certainly until there was a satisfactory resolution for the all parties concerned, particularly for the needs of the classroom teachers and the students.

In summary, Lynda's meaning for leadership linked the concept with power and the power to influence. Having noted that, she did indicate the desire to work collaboratively with teachers and students to solve problems and to lead wherever possible. Lynda emphasized honesty,

fairness, and the need to value the talents and gifts which everyone brings to an organization and the need to recognize and draw out those talents for the good of all. She also noted the value she placed on intuition as a tool to enhance her own leadership with both adults and students. While Lynda indicated that she did not enjoy exerting her authority as part of the leadership process, she was learning to recognize the need to do so in certain situations.

Discussion of the Findings

Included in this section will be a discussion of the participants' backgrounds, the meanings they give to leadership, and the question of gender as a factor in their work. Participants' backgrounds will be discussed in the initial section.

Backgrounds of the participants. Each of the women principals in this study had been principals for at least one year prior to the onset of this research, and had had significant leadership responsibilities within the Board prior to becoming principals. Two of the three, Esther and Lynda, had been vice principals. Kathryn had had extensive experience as a curriculum consultant; Lynda had also been a curriculum partner. Curriculum consultants and partners worked out of the Board office, often working closely with one or more superintendents in providing curriculum support, development and enhancement to teachers and principals throughout the school division. Some of their work, particularly Lynda's work in the area of second language, involved some policy discussions, however, for the most part, curriculum consultants and partners were expected to be about the business of implementing curriculum and improving instruction. Their mandates were largely about selling sets of curriculum ideas and helping teachers put them into action in their classroom settings. While in one sense their mandates may appear as the mere implementation of someone else's agenda, their roles demanded a good deal of thoughtful, creative energy in fleshing out areas of curriculum which were previously in skeleton states.

The findings about participants backgrounds is quite congruent with the findings of earlier researchers and writers who explored avenues through which women became principals (Slauenwhite & Skok, 1991; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Blackmore, 1989). All three had been successful and innovative teachers from the beginning of their careers. All acknowledged the

support and encouragement of their teaching colleagues in their consideration about whether or not to apply for leadership positions within their boards. Each commented on support they had received from senior administrators in their quest for leadership experience. Kathryn, the most experienced principal, felt that she had been strongly and well mentored by a superintendent of curriculum with whom she had worked closely as a curriculum consultant. She entered the principalship of a small school without having served as a vice principal, and found herself to be the only women principal within the Board. Kathryn was not socialized to administration or to the organization in ways which Hart (1995) suggests are often the case. Outside the guidance which she received from her mentor, the superintendent, Kathryn was left to become socialized to the principalship on her own. In her initial interview, she discussed instances of gossip and unkind comments which were purportedly made about her by colleagues who had a problem with the fact that she had not followed what they perceived to be the normal channels to enter the principalship. While she outwardly expressed neither hurt or anger, one would sense that both had been present in varying degrees at the beginning of her tenure as principal. Lynda expressed some similar experiences, although she also had language and culture added to her qualifications by speculative colleagues. She described one situation in which a male colleague actually came to her early in her principalship to tell her that she was doing a good job, and that his initial thoughts about her appointment being due to gender and linguistic-cultural background had been wrong. Esther, who was older than her two colleagues, made no reference to hearing any such comments. She did express amazement, during several of her interviews, about having become a principal, because she had entered teaching to help make schools better places for children, but had not planned to enter administration.

Similar to some of Adler's, Laney's and Packer's (1993) findings, each of the three women had chosen to enter the profession of teaching. Also similar were the facts that none of the three expressed career plans which resembled "or paralleled a male model"(Adler, Laney & Packer,1993, p. 132). While it would not be accurate to say that they drifted into administration, each received encouragement or mentoring that aimed them in that direction. One other finding regarding the backgrounds of the three principals was that each considered herself and instructional leader and made that claim openly on occasion. Esther, in particular, noted that she was "a curriculum and instructional leader and not just a manager who runs a tight ship".

Much of their work in instructional leadership was well supported by Board sponsored staff development programs, which each of the three were working, with teachers, toward translating into the professional development programs within their own schools. Such programs were particularly evident in Kathryn's and Esther's schools. Each of the three were well aware of the current interpretation of the role of the instructional leader as discussed by writers such as Smith and Andrews (1989) and Patterson (1992). They realized the importance of their formal roles in their schools as resource providers, resource leaders, thoughtful and skilled communicators, and leaders in decision-making processes. As a reflection of their participation in staff development programs, teachers were aware of and likely to have had similar expectations similar to those the principals had for themselves.

Meanings of leadership. The meanings the three principals gave to leadership varied slightly among the three, and also seemed to be influenced by life experience and experience in principalships. Two the the principals, Kathryn and Esther, talked about leadership as problem-solving ; a second common theme, noted by the researcher, was the role of leaders as adult educators. In addition, Esther used other metaphors to describe her understanding of her own leadership. Lynda, however, talked much more about qualities of leadership than either of her two colleagues. Although she did discuss problem-solving as one of the qualities of an effective leader and an effective principal, she discussed this quality among others rather than a conceptualization on its own as did Kathryn and Esther.

Problem-solving was for Kathryn the main way in which she enacted her leadership in the school setting. She discussed problem-solving related to curriculum improvements and innovations, improving teacher competence and teaching strategies, problems related to student discipline, and problems of maintenance of the school, which involved problem-solving with support staff and custodians. She also discussed problem-solving with parents related to a number of these issues. Kathryn claimed she did much of her work in these areas through listening, caring and relationship building. She described the importance of relationships between teachers and students and between herself and teachers and students. She expressed the importance of caring and being perceived by others to care about them and their problems.

Much of Kathryn's description of her work was similar to findings Hurty (1995) had in her study of women principals leading through 'power with'. Like Hurty's principals, Kathryn did

use a full range of emotional energy in her efforts to problem-solve and work with the teachers, support staff, students, parents and members of the community. She appears to have learned, through years of experience, the importance of supporting the important work contributed by each member of her learning community, while working to change aspects of situations which were counterproductive to the well-being of individuals and the collective work of individuals within the school. Throughout her stories, there is much evidence of nurtured growth, reciprocal talk, and the use of collaboration in decision-making and planning wherever possible. Kathryn also appeared to rely a great deal on reflection and pondered mutuality, which meant thinking not only about her own work in relation to issues, but how her actions could or did affect the work of others in the school and the well-being of the school as a whole. Similar to Regan's (1995) views of teaching and leadership in schools as a double helix, Kathryn in a teaching administrator, who used her role, wherever possible, to teach others, and to learn from them. She recognized clearly the degree to which "school leadership (teaching and administering) [were] intertwined, connected and interactive" (Hurty, 1995, p. 385). A second main theme noted in Kathryn's interviews was that of the principal as adult educator. In this role, Kathryn made great efforts to model, for teachers, the kinds of attitudes and teaching strategies she thought were important in strong effective teaching. She worked collaboratively with teachers, parents and students toward common goals as much as possible. Similar to Hallinger and Richarson's (1988) claim, she relied heavily on her own and others' technical expertise, and good relationships with others to accomplish things within the school, rather than relying only on her position power as principal. The role of adult educator also tied back to her former experiences as a creative, innovative teacher and a curriculum consultant.

Esther expressed the meaning of her leadership experiences in more symbolic terms. She spoke about being considered, by teachers in her school, as the 'keeper of the dream' on which she and the teachers had worked to develop over a number of years. Similar to Bolman and Deal's (1991) perspective, Esther was successful in this and similar ventures in her school because she could "understand the deepest values and most pressing concerns of her constituents" (p. 443), who included teachers, students, their parents and members of the community. While a large part of her understanding was based on her own personality and abilities, additional factors which added credibility were her age, previous experiences in

schools, life experiences, and experiences as a parent and community member. Unlike Blackmore's (1989) claim, that women's experiences in community life were undervalued as preparation for school administration, Esther's experiences point to the value of her past experiences in understanding the school context and using her understandings to build bridges to nurture and develop key aspects of vision which positively influenced the teachers and students with whom she worked most closely.

Similar to Apps (1994) ideas, Esther was not afraid to take some risks, such as letting teachers develop, articulate and implement ideas for student lead conference reporting to parents regarding their achievements. Similar to Hurty's findings, Esther was caring, supportive, a good listener, a reflective thinker who considered the welfare of others, but also committed to the values of cooperation and collaboration. She was suspicious of the use of power if it was not used collectively, however, she learned to use her position power judiciously and sparingly if it became necessary for the good of everyone in the school.

Two of the metaphors which Esther expressed as symbols of her leadership were leadership as grandmothering, which involved many previously discussed characteristics, and leadership as servanthood. In the leader as servant metaphor, Esther saw power as shared, decision-making as shared and, in herself, a leader who was not afraid to say to teachers "I need your help to lead in this area". In some sense, her views of the servant leadership metaphor are like Greenleaf's (1977) writing on the subject when he talks about a servant leader as one who is capable of listening and understanding, and of acceptance and empathy for the needs and concerns of others. Her view of herself as a teacher who entered administration to help make schools better places for children rather than as a personal or career aspiration also put one in mind of Greenleaf's view of the natural servant. He states, "The person who is servant first, is more likely to persevere and refine a particular hypothesis on what serves another's highest priority needs than is the person who is leader first and who later serves out the promptings of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations" (p. 14). Much of what Esther valued about herself as a leader was expressed through the servant metaphor. The themes which the researcher noted in Esther's work on leadership as problem-solving and leadership as adult education carried out from a similar perspective.

Lynda spoke of neither symbols nor metaphors in describing her leadership. Instead, she

focussed mainly on qualities of leadership - both those she viewed as good leadership and those she saw as poor leadership. Much of her discussion, particularly about poor leadership, was related to the concept of power as authority, and abuses of power by people in leadership positions. The qualities which she noted as most important to her were using power to influence situations in positive ways, authentic use of shared decision-making processes, acknowledging the contributions or everyone in the school, nurturing, listening to others, valuing others as people, and problem-solving with people. Her views about leadership are similar to findings of Hurty (1995), Patterson (1992), and Smith and Andrews (1989).

The most likely reason for the differences between Lynda's descriptions of her work and the other principals of theirs was her relatively recent appointment to the principalship, and her even more recent appointment as principal of a relatively large dual-track school in a inner-core urban neighbourhood. While mentioning these qualities is in no way an attempt to undermine Lynda's work or achievements as an instructional leader, it is clear that she has had less time to ponder many of the aspects of her work that her two more senior colleagues have reflected on for some time.

The question of gender. Shakeshaft (1989) and other feminist scholars link the concept of gender with a cultural term which "Describes the characteristics that we ascribe to people because of their sex and the ways we believe they behave based on our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female" (p. 326). When the work of the three female principals is considered, there appear to be some similarities between their descriptions of their work and the findings of other writers. Similar to other women administrators, relationships with others, be they teachers, students, parents, support staff, or community members were central and important aspects of their work. A focus on the teaching-learning processes in the school, both as they affected students, and as they were part of teachers' work as adult learners, were also central in these women's thinking. Community building was also emphasized by each of the women in this research. Esther's focus on cooperation and shared decision-making, and the focuses on shared decision-making expressed by Kathryn and Lynda were at the essence of this community building (Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft, Nowell & Perry, 1991; Shakeshaft, 1993).

Eagly, Karau and Johnson (1992) noted among there findings, that although women principals were oriented to developing and having strong interpersonal relationships, they were

also task-oriented. These findings also describe, well, those of the three principals in this research. While all three discussed and illustrated the importance of caring about and listening to people, they were also constantly and consistently concerned with ensuring that the tasks related to providing the best possible instructional environment for students are being undertaken.

Another interesting finding, noted in Lynda's discussions, was her emphasis on the use of her intuition. While she linked the use of intuition with other aspects of her work, she felt her intuition served her well in the developing and maintaining of human relationships. No discussion of intuition has been noted in any other researchers' findings about leadership. Yet it is in all likelihood a common aspect which most administrators use as part of the tacit knowledge base from which they work on a daily basis

Multi-paradigmatic perspectives on leadership. Over the past number of years, writers and theorists have been calling on researchers to explore their findings from a variety of perspectives (Capper, 1992; Reynolds, 1995; Walker & Lambert, 1995; Glazer, 1991; Gosetti & Rusch, 1995). Capper (1992) comments that "A multiparadigm approach expands discourse availability and supports competing ways of giving meaning to a situation (p. 112). On a similar note, Gosetti and Rusch (1995) claim that "Multiple lenses help us focus in more than one way on how we view a concept like leadership and increase our chances of bringing embedded notions into view" (p. 14). The aim of this study was to view, through the eyes and voices of the participants, their experiences with leadership and the meanings they attach to their experiences. While the predominant lens used to conduct and present the data is required to be interpretive, views from the traditional, functionalist perspective still persist. Many theoretical aspects related to instructional leadership have developed from the effective schools perspective, and are very much products of functionalist organizational perspectives. Yet in concert with the functionalist perspectives are leaders who interpreted and helped those with whom they worked to tell their own stories and to view the world of their school as unique, and developed by in response to the world as it appeared to them through their interpretive lenses.

Of the critical and feminist, however, there appeared to be little of theoretical congruence within the findings. While the researcher perceived that each of the three support a feminist stance of some definition, none of the three openly proclaimed as much. Perhaps one of the reasons for this was the concern each had with ensuring an open, accepting, and democratic

environment. The emphasis each placed on cooperation, shared decision-making, and open communication did, they believed, as much as was possible in equalizing power relations within the school setting at that time. Perhaps, similar to Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) they simply preferred to keep within themselves their own private definitions of feminism and their effects on their work within the schools. The question of feminist theories and response in relation to the findings from this research remains an area for further investigation and reflection.

Conclusion

This initial paper from a three year interpretive study (Fennell & King, 1993), using phenomenological methods, had among its purposes to begin exploring the interpretation of the participants' experiences from a variety of theoretical perspectives. From the functionalist and interpretive, we see these women functioning in similar ways to women administrators discussed by Shakeshaft (1994). Similar to others, Kathryn, Esther and Lynda were concerned with empowering teachers and students, establishing and maintaining strong instructional priorities, being attuned to the social, cultural, and emotional development of students, student-student and student-teacher relationships, and with providing teachers with support and feedback about their teaching on a daily basis. While these characteristics of leadership seem congruent with Blackmore's (1989) feminist reconstruction of leadership, substantially more work must be done with data from this research to clarify the existence and meaning of these findings from the critical and the feminist as well as the interpretive and functionalist perspectives.

The title of this paper, a passion for excellence, also merits further exploration within the data from this study. From the initial levels of analysis, one can find many examples of the passion which each of the principals has for their work as teachers and administrators, and of the importance each places on the concept of excellence within their school setting. As the analysis and writing of this data continues, more detailed understandings of the concepts of passion and excellence will come to light to add to the body of knowledge that studying the work of women principals brings to the changing and developing roles of the principalship and to the general area of leadership theories.

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